

Fire Extinguisher Realities

Here is a statistic you should know. Those 10-BC dry chemical fire extinguishers we all carry (designated B-I by the Coast Guard) will discharge for about 10 seconds. For an onboard fire with a head start, that won't be long enough to put the fire out. Then what?

If your boat is larger than 26', Coast Guard regulations require a second B-I extinguisher aboard, that or a larger B-II. A second 10-BC gives you another nine-second shot-if the fire hasn't put this second unit out of reach. A B-II extinguisher is better, carrying at least a 60-BC rating, which doesn't mean the extinguisher will discharge for six times as long, but does mean it has six times the extinguishing capacity. But if your single B-II is on the other side of the flames.

Meeting Coast Guard requirements equips your boat to extinguish only the smallest of onboard fires. For real fire protection, take aboard B-II extinguishers, or at least the larger B-I, rated 40-BC. All but the smallest watercraft should have at least two extinguishers aboard, mounted in opposite ends of the boat.

Don Casey Tip #33 is reprinted from the Boat US Weekly Web Specials dated 12/22/2009. Don Casey is the best-selling author of "Do-it-Yourself" books, including "This Old Boat". His books provide valuable and money-saving solutions to hull and deck repair, boat electronics, sail repair, and much more. You can access his library at: http://www.boatus.com/boattech/howto_lib.htm